

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00  
SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03  
NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 /052 W  
-----131048Z 097794 /11

O R 130938Z MAY 77  
FM AMEMBASSY SOFIA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2867  
INFO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE  
AMEMBASSY BERLIN  
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST  
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST  
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW  
AMCONSUL MUNICH  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE  
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA  
AMEMBASSY WARSAW  
USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SOFIA 1004

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, BU, PINR  
SUBJECT: BORIS VELCHEV DROPPED FROM BCP

REF: A) 76 SOFIA 2145; B) 76 SOFIA 2719

1. SUMMARY. BULGARIAN COMMUNIST PARTY (BCP) HAS STRIPPED SENIOR POLITBURO MEMBER BORIS VELCHEV OF ALL PARTY POSTS INCLUDING CENTRAL COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP. THE 63 YEAR-OLD VELCHEV, A CENTRAL FIGURE IN BCP AFFAIRS FOR MORE THAN TWENTY YEARS, HAD BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR PARTY ORGANIZATIONAL AFFAIRS AND FOR RELATIONS WITH RULING CP'S. WE ASSUME USSR MUST HAVE BEEN CONSULTED AND AGREED TO HIS SACKING. SAME PLENUM  
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WHICH FIRED VELCHEV ELEVATED TO STATUS OF CC SECRETARIES DIMITUR STANISHEV, HEAD OF CC INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS DEPT, AND PETUR DYULGEROV, EDITOR OF PARTY NEWSPAPER. NO HARD INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE ON REASON FOR VELCHEV'S FALL, BUT WE DO NOT BELIEVE IT WAS BECAUSE OF ANY FUNDAMENTAL DISAGREEMENT OVER POLICY TOWARD USSR. END SUMMARY.

2. TERSE ANNOUNCEMENT IN BULGARIAN MEDIA MAY 13 REPORTED THE DECISION OF BCP CENTRAL COMMITTEE PLENUM RELIEVING BORIS VELCHEV, HITHERTO REGARDED AS SECOND OR THIRD MOST POWERFUL MEMBER OF POLITBURO, OF ALL PARTY OFFICES. THUS ENDS A POLITICAL CAREER THAT INVOLVED 15 YEARS AS POLITBURO MEMBER, 18 YEARS AS CC SECRETARY, AND 19 YEARS AS FULL MEMBER OF CC. THE ANNOUNCEMENT VAGUELY ATTRIBUTED FIRING TO "EXPEDIENCE" AND, AS USUAL, MEDIA PROVIDE NO FURTHER ENLIGHTENMENT. VELCHEV HAS BEEN MEMBER OF BCP SINCE 1936, WAS IMPRISONED BY ROYALIST GOVT OF BULGARIA 1941-44, AND HAD WORKED HIS WAY UP THROUGH THE SOFIA CITY PARTY APPARATUS. HE HAD FOR MOST OF HIS CAREER BEEN FIRMLY IDENTIFIED WITH TODOR ZHIVKOV.

3. NEWSPAPER "LITERATURE FRONT" APRIL 14 PUBLISHED ARTICLE STRONGLY CRITICIZING VELCHEV'S SON ILIYA, A FILM DIRECTOR, FOR "LACK OF TALENT" AND, SIGNIFICANTLY, FOR "DEVIATIONS FROM MARXIST-LENINIST IDEOLOGICAL-ESTHETIC PRINCIPLES". IN RETROSPECT, ONE MUST ASSUME THAT SUCH AN ARTICLE WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN PUBLISHED UNLESS SOMEONE HAD ALREADY SMELLED BLOOD. ACCORDING TO LOCAL GOSSIP, ILLIYA VELCHEV IS CURRENTLY IN PARIS, HAS BEEN SUMMONED BACK TO BULGARIA, AND HAS REFUSED TO RETURN. VELCHEV'S OTHER SON, VLADIMIR, FORMER DCM IN WASHINGTON, IS PRESENTLY AMBASSADOR TO UK. HIS TENURE MAY BE ABBREVIATED.

4. BORIS VELCHEV WAS ON THE REVIEWING STAND WITH OTHER POLITBURO MEMBERS MAY FIRST AND HIS PORTRAIT WAS CARRIED. HIS LAST PUBLIC APPEARANCE OF RECORD WAS MAY 4 WHEN HE WAS AMONG THOSE GREETING ETHIOPIAN LEADER MENGISTU HAILE-MARIAM AT

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SOFIA AIRPORT. ON THE OTHER HAND, PARTY SECRETARY OGNYAN DOYNOV WENT TO WARSAW TO ATTEND MEETING OF PARTY SECRETARIES ON ORGANIZATIONAL WORK WHICH OPENED MAY 11. NORMALLY VELCHEV WOULD HAVE PERFORMED THIS FUNCTION.

5. SPECULATION AS TO REASONS FOR VELCHEV'S FALL ARE OF COURSE RIFE, BUT AS YET THEY ARE BASED ON OPINION OR INFERENCES AND NOT ON FACTS. GIVEN HIS RESPONSIBILITIES FOR INTRA-PARTY COORDINATION, IT SEEMS REASONABLE TO ASSUME VELCHEV WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN FIRED WITHOUT ADVANCE COORDINATION WITH AND APPROVAL FROM MOSCOW. IT IS NOTEWORTHY THAT SOVIET AMBASSADOR BASOVSKII HAD NOTHING FAVORABLE TO SAY ABOUT VELCHEV IN HIS DISCUSSION

OF BULGARIAN LEADERSHIP WITH AMBASSADOR IN OCTOBER 1976 (REF A). REASONING BACKWARDS, BBC HAS COMMENTED THAT VELCHEV'S REMOVAL MUST HAVE RESULTED FROM DISPUTE OVER BULGARIAN POLICY TOWARD USSR SINCE NOTHING ELSE WOULD HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENTLY IMPORTANT TO MERIT IT. THIS SEEMS TO US VERY TENUOUS REASONING. THERE ARE, HOWEVER, OTHER RUMORS THAT VELCHEV HAD TO GO BECAUSE HE HAD OPPOSED

IMPLEMENTATION OF SOVIET ORDERS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH  
YUGOSLAVIA. THIS IS POSSIBLE. WE DON'T KNOW. IF THIS WAS  
THE REASON, IT PROBABLY WILL EVENTUALLY LEAK OUT.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SOFIA 1004

6. SAME PLENUM ANNOUNCEMENT NAMED DIMITUR STANISHEV AND  
PETUR DYULGEROV AS NEW MEMBERS OF PARTY SECRETARIAT. STANISHEV,  
53, AND DYULGEROV, 48, BECAME FULL MEMBERS OF CC AT 11TH  
PARTY CONGRESS IN APRIL 1976. STANISHEV HAS SINCE THEN SERVED  
AS HEAD OF POLITBURO FOREIGN POLICY AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS  
DEPT WHILE DYULGEROV, FORMER CHIEF OF BLAGOEVGRAD OKRUG, HAS  
BEEN EDITOR OF CC PAPER RABOTNICHESKO DELO. HAVING SERVED  
THESE APPRENTICESHIPS, STANISHEV NOW REPLACES KONSTANTIN  
TELLALOV (WHO WAS PACKED OFF TO OTTAWA AFTER 11TH CONGRESS).  
DYULGEROV REPLACES GEORGI BOKOV (WHO LOST SECRETARIAT MEMBER-  
SHIP AND EDITORSHIP OF RABOTNICHESKO DELO AT SAME TIME)  
BOTH HAVE RISEN VERY RAPIDLY AND JOIN THE SELECT COMPANY OF  
OTHER SUPERSTARS, LYUDMILLA ZHIVKOVA, OGNAN DOYNOV AND  
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ANDREY LUKANOV.

7. COMMENT: MEMBERSHIP OF POLITBURO NOW STANDS AT EIGHT, INCLUDING SYMBOLIC OLDSTERS IVAN MIKHAILOV AND TSOLA DRAGOICHEVA. NAMING OF NEW MEMBERS HAS BEEN OVERDUE FOR AT LEAST A YEAR. EXPECTATION WOULD BE THAT SOME CANDIDATE MEMBERS WOULD BECOME FULL MEMBERS, SECRETARIES LIKE DOYNOV WOULD BECOME CANDIDATE MEMBERS, AND POSSIBLY WOULD BE JOINED AT THAT LEVEL BY NEWCOMERS. BUT THE PATTERN OF JUMPING PEOPLE SEVERAL SPACES COULD JUST AS EASILY BE USED. OUR EXPECTATION IS THAT FONMIN PETUR MLADENOV, WHO SEEMS PARTICULARLY WELL-REGARDED BY SOVIETS (SEE AGAIN REF A) WILL BECOME A FULL MEMBER. IT IS ALSO POSSIBLE THAT LYUDMILLA WILL BE NAMED A CANDIDATE MEMBER.

8. OBVIOUSLY VELCHEV'S SIN MUST HAVE BEEN GREAT BUT WE ARE FAR FROM KNOWING EVEN INEXACTLY OF WHAT IT CONSISTED. AMONG BULGARIAN COMMUNISTS, VELCHEV WAS RESPECTED PROBABLY ONLY AFTER TODOR ZHIVKOV. THE POSITION OF STANKO TODOROV, WHO STANDS NEXT IN LINE TO ZHIVKOV, MUST BE REGARDED AS HAVING BEEN STRENGTHENED. HE IS PERHAPS THE PRINCIPAL BENEFICIARY. WHILE HE HAD NOT BEEN AN IDEOLOGICAL SPOKESMAN (LIKE LILOV), VELCHEV HAS GENERALLY BEEN THOUGHT TO BE AMONG THE MORE CONSERVATIVE FIGURES IN THE POLITBURO AND SOME HAD REFERRED TO HIM AS "OUR SUSLOV." ONE LOCAL WAG HAS ALREADY COINED AN EPIGRAM: "VELCHEV'S FIRING DEMONSTRATES THE BASIC EGALITARIANISM OF BULGARIA; ANYONE CAN BE FIRED BY ZHIVKOV." HERZ

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## Message Attributes

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